

Pacific Pride

For the Families of Marines and Sailors of the Command Element



June 2002

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No.6

Deployment brings tears, adventure

By Sgt. Brian J. Griffin

ABOARD THE USS BELLEAU WOOD – Family and friends watch anxiously as warriors with packed bags board warships docked in San Diego. After emotional goodbyes and hugs, the reality of today's deployment brings with it the outlook of a long separation.



Saying goodbye

The more than 2,200 members from the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) left their homes, family and friends June 15, beginning a routine six-month deployment to the Western Pacific and Arabian Gulf regions aboard the USS Belleau Wood (LHA-3), USS Denver (LPD-9) and the USS Mount Vernon (LSD-39).

Following an intense six-month pre-deployment exercise cycle in which Battalion Landing Team 3/1, Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 166 (reinforced), MEU Service Support Group 11 and the 11th MEU Command Element trained together, the 11th MEU received their Special Operations Capable certification last month from I Marine Expeditionary Force.

This SOC certification means the 11th MEU is ready to execute more than 20 types of military operations ranging from amphibious assaults and raids to noncombatant evacuations and humanitarian assistance operations in the Pacific Command and Central Command regions. This ability to rapidly respond to a wide array of crises has validated the relevancy of the MEU and created its frequent use in past years by geographic combatant commanders in places such as East Timor, Eritrea, Kosovo and Somalia. Now during Operation Enduring Freedom, MEUs continue to quickly respond when called upon as Marines from the 15th MEU did as the first conventional force to go ashore in Afghanistan.

Prior to the departure of the 11th MEU (SOC) June 15 the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. James L. Jones, spoke words

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From the Commanding Officer



Now that the 11th MEU is underway, we can look back on June 15 as a landmark day. We all managed to get through the hardest part of leaving— saying goodbye to loved ones and friends. Though this was a sad time, it also was an exciting time as the journey we have been training for during the last six months has begun.

Prior to our departure on the morning of June 15, the 11th MEU was honored to have the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James L. Jones, and the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Sergeant Major Alford McMichael, visit and talk to the Marines and Sailors on each ship. Wishing us well on our deployment, they also told the Marines and Sailors they were confident in their abilities to succeed at any mission if tasked. I, too, have the same confidence in our Marines and Sailors.

Now that we are underway, we have begun to make the ship our new home. I have walked around ship and have seen pictures and mementos from home tucked here and there in work and living spaces. While we can't replace the comforts that come with being with our families, your Marines and Sailors remain in good spirits and are keeping busy. Depending on their interests, they are working out in the gym, attending church services, using the ship's library and soon, a variety of college courses will be offered

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of encouragement to the Marines and Sailors aboard the three warships of the Belleau Wood Amphibious Ready Group.

"You are going into a world that is full of challenge...

You are the most ready force the Navy and Marine Corps has to offer... You will do well, there is no doubt," Gen. Jones said.



Cpl. Snider and Gen. Jones

During his speech Gen. Jones expressed the importance of the Navy and Marine Corps team being the ultimate expression of national response during times of

uncertainty and conflict around the world.

"We should consider ourselves at war and I think it is appropriate to say good hunting," Gen. Jones said.

If called upon to participate in real-world missions, Col. Anthony M. Haslam, commanding officer, 11th MEU (SOC), has no hesitations that his Marines and Sailors are prepared for any situation that may arise.

"These Marines and Sailors are well-trained and ready for any mission that we could be ordered by higher headquarters to support while forward deployed," Haslam said. "I am very pleased with the amount of effort, teamwork and dedication everyone has put into our preparation to deploy."

With the training and certification complete, Marines and Sailors are looking forward to the challenges of the deployment. For some, saying goodbye to loved ones is just one of the costs that come with our continual defense of democracy, freedom and humanity around the globe.

"Deploying is just another part of being a Marine, and leaving friends and family behind is just one price we have to pay," said Cpl. Brian A. Price, classified material control clerk, Command Element, 11th MEU (SOC).

Price, a Wenatchee, Wash. native, is on his second deployment with the 11th MEU (SOC), and said he is looking forward to the possibility of having an active role in current or future military operations.

While deployed, the Marines and Sailors of the 11th MEU (SOC) are scheduled to conduct various training exercises while staying prepared to respond to any contingency if ordered by higher headquarters. The 11th MEU (SOC) is scheduled to return to Southern California in December.

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to interested Marines and Sailors. We will continue to do our best to provide as many activities as possible during the deployment.

By the time this newsletter makes it to your mailbox, we will have stopped in Hawaii to conduct what we call sustainment training, or refresher training. Making the most of Hawaii's weapon ranges and training facilities, our goal was to keep the skills of your Marine or Sailor sharp. This type of training will continue throughout the deployment to ensure we remain ready to meet the challenges of a rapid-response force.

I truly hope everything on the home front is going well and want to remind you that the Key Volunteer Network is there to help and support you during this deployment. They have volunteered and are truly willing and able to assist you in many ways.

We have been doing our best to keep the MEU telephone hotline and web site up to date. Please take advantage of these information tools to get the most recent information on what your Marine or Sailor is doing. Also, now is a very good time to drop letters and care packages in the mail for your Marine or Sailor. Communication with loved ones back home helps make the days go by a little faster, so please keep in touch.

Thank you for the support you continually have provided to your Marine or Sailor. It means a lot.



Sincerely,

Anthony M. Haslam
Colonel, USMC

**Visit us online @
www.11meu.usmc.mil**

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Command Element Scuttle

S-1: ADMINISTRATION; STAFF JUDGE ADVOCATE; DISBURSING; RELIGIOUS MINISTRY TEAM; PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

The office spaces filled up quickly as the administration, legal, disbursing, public affairs Marines and the Chaplain's office Sailors embarked the USS Belleau Wood June 15. Gray walls and once empty shelves and drawers are now covered or filled with six months of mission essential gear.

The Admin guys took special interest making things a little more like home. Under the tutelage of Staff Sergeant Hernandez and Sergeant Hadley, they somehow managed to put in wall-to-wall carpeting and brought in a refrigerator and a microwave (no kidding). Sergeant Hadley was overheard saying: "As long as Captain Johnson is happy." (It seems to be working).

Speaking of officers. Major Russell, the lawyer, has managed to ROE (stands for Rules Of Engagement), ROE, ROE our boat in addition to coordinating the opportunity for

dozens of Marines to pursue college level education.

Locked up in the disbursing cage are First Lieutenant Howard, Staff Sergeant Tauriac, and Sergeants Rodriguez and Ruiz who are trying to figure out how much of the cut they can get out of the split pay.

First Lieutenant Batson was caught once again with her hand in the cookie jar. After her 10th double stuff Oreo she said, "I keep missing chow." Sergeant 'Slim Jim' Griffin has been going to the gym and doing his best to bulk up. Rumor has it he is looking to take on Mike Tyson in 2003.

Meanwhile a couple of decks below, RP1 Taylor is working with Chaplain Mentzer pulling everything together for the Tiger Cruise.

All kidding aside, the office spaces are small and full, but we have all managed to sneak a little spot to keep close to us what means the most. The pictures of our families that fill us with memories guaranteed to last at least the next six months.

S-2: HET; RADIO BATTALION; METEOROLOGICAL SUPPORT TEAM; GROUND SENSOR PLT

June 15th, 2002 marked a very important day in the lives of the 11th MEU S-2 Marines. We have begun a six-month mission as America's premier force in readiness. This mission is going to require all of us to outperform what we thought our limitations were. Basically, we're all going to be busy doing what we do best, providing the intelligence which helps keep all of us safe — a duty that we all take very seriously.

We've only been out to sea for a few days and already we have seen that the camaraderie of our section is going to make for a great six months together. In both the working and living areas, our Marines are helping one another and making life as good as possible for themselves and their colleagues. Everyone has carved a niche for themselves and personalized it with those things that will remind us of home.

All of us are looking forward to our first port call in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Hopefully our time there will include some free time to enjoy the tropical paradise of the island of Oahu. Some of the Marines in the S-2 have been stationed in Hawaii in the past. Meaning that, once again, we will have excellent intelligence on our area of operations. Only this time it will be in the form of what beaches have the softest sand and which tiki-hut serves the best piña colada.

HEADQUARTERS COMMANDANT

This past month for the Headquarters Commandant section has been a busy one. Most Marines in the section took leave prior to the deployment. Kudos goes to Sgt Olivares for his fine initiative in planning, organizing, and executing the storage of personal belongings and vehicles of our single Marines. He is the Marine responsible for this success! Good job Sgt O! The other Marines in the



Sgt. Olivares and Gen. Jones

section provided outstanding assistance in ensuring the barracks and vehicles were turned over to the 13th MEU, therefore, making our embarkation a success.

Sgt Harrison, Sgt Olivares and LCpl Abrigo had family members come aboard and visit the USS Belleau Wood prior to departure. On the day of our departure Sergeants Harrison and Olivares had their photos taken with the Commandant of the Marine Corps, the most senior Officer in the Marine Corps.

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S-3: OPERATIONS

The MEU S-3 section is up and operating aboard ship. As we settle in and begin working through the normal frustrations associated with tearing down your office, doing a seabag (and embarkation box) drag to the "boat", and re-establishing your life in a much smaller and overcrowded environment, everyone has begun developing their own routines to cope. We see a variety of different ways of dealing with the changes involved with adjusting to our new shipboard life. Some of us have embraced this as a time to "experiment", and others have simply allowed their personalities to become more intense.

-LtCol Driggers thinks we're still back at the CP. However, since no one has called to ask when he's coming home, he has seen it as one long workday, and is using up our paper supplies at a cyclic rate.

-Maj Passant has led the way on the 'experimental' hairstyle wave that has swept the section. Don't tell his wife but he (almost) has a mustache now.

-Capt. Belknap has discovered a possible new profession as a barber. We will see if he has any second time customers.

-Capt Aaby is still missing (as usual) if anyone at home has seen him, please have him report to the SACC. We are pretty sure he is aboard and rumor has it that he can be found in the morning ATO meetings.

-Capt Freeby has decided that he will be a fitness model when he returns to California, and has adjusted his diet to include only hundreds of dollars of supplements and hard-boiled eggs. We all dread the possible gastronomical repercussions of this decision.

-The "new guy" in the section, Capt "Swiatkowski, just call me Switch" has joined upper lip hair club for men. He and Maj Passant have been competing in the "whose stach is bigger" race. Being a KC-130 pilot he continues to ask where the hotel swimming pool is and now knows his way down to the well deck, which serves as our "pool" when launching landing craft.

-Capt Ghiozzi, no longer having a car payment, has redirected those funds towards supplements. Most importantly, he is leading the "major hairstyle change" club by volunteering as Capt Belknap's first hair creation. Rumor has it that Capt Ghiozzi could be heard screaming from inside the male head, followed closely by Capt Belknap's voice saying, "but it will grow back in 6 months!"

-Lt Grinnell has been using the excuse of "studying for my HAM radio license" to facilitate her hiding in her stateroom so she doesn't become the next "new hairstyle" volunteer. Her return to the SACC, oddly enough, is expected to coincide with Sgt Rachael Sim's return in Hawaii.

-MGySgt Oliver is still in mourning over the loss of his dearest possession, his Honda... I mean his Harley. Safe to say he is already making plans to obtain a new "Hog". But does Ruth know that?

-GySgt Williams has not been formally charged in the assault of the Commandant of the Marine Corps (pictures ----> available on the web site) but he has been overheard talking about himself and his buddy the General.

-SSgt Delacueva, having witnessed the eating habits of our Captains, has been conducting emergency NBC training in the SACC. Having been abandoned by our NBC Officer, he tends to find good "cover and concealment" aboard the ship.

-SSgt Trombatore has been busy protecting our force (in a non-lethal way) and representing the section at the XO's nightly meetings. SSgt T's "Hot Smokin' Word" newsgrams from that meeting ensure the section stays one step ahead of the XO and the SgtMaj—usually.

-Sgt Garmon smiled once. And anytime LtCol Driggers, MGySgt Oliver, or GySgt Williams try to get "salty" and talk about their 3d float, Sgt Garmon just shakes his head and mutters something about "those Boots." After all this is his 4th float in a row with 11th MEU.

-Sgt Kindelspire has decided to formally work in the chow hall for the next 30 days. That's right, he's not just a groupie anymore. But at least he's out of the blast radius of the supplement crew.

-Cpl Rodgers has given up on the idea of sleep. He is also looking for a handy bell tower. At least he has his sense of humor.

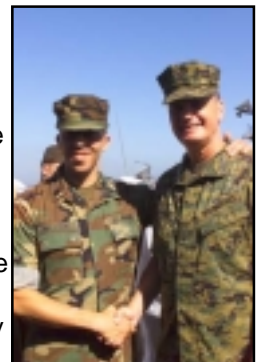
-Cpl Poffenberger has been quietly dealing with the steadily increasing mutilation of his name with quiet dignity. Or perhaps he's just afraid of the odd assortment of people he's been thrown in with at the last moment. He still likes the boat better than 29 Palms—at least so far.

-LCpl Patrick is working at the ship's version of a convenience store for the next 30 days. Except that it's not convenient, and there's not much to buy. He also has escaped the supplement crew's wrath.

-CWO Dailey, Maj Kopelman, and Capt Prindiville have cleverly found a way to skip the initial part of the transit, and will be meeting us in Hawaii after completing their coordination meetings.

-Sgt Sims will also rejoin the crew in Pearl Harbor having to go on emergency leave the week we departed. We would like to offer our sincere condolences to Sgt Sims on the recent loss of her father. She and her family are in our thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

The Marines are hard at work as they shuffle through paper and binders and computer files at the cyclic rate in preparation for our upcoming exercises and ~~liberty~~ working ports. We are looking forward to working together as a team over the next (approximately) six months, and are anxiously awaiting the many letters and CARE PACKAGES that we *know* our families and friends will send. Quickly. Semper Fidelis.



**GySgt. Williams
and Gen. Jones**

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S-6: RADIO COMMUNICATIONS; DATA; NETWORK; JTF ENABLER

After months of extensive training and numerous preparations, the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit embarked on its six-month journey in the Pacific Ocean to destinations unknown. For many, it is their first deployment, and leaving friends and family behind was a tough thing to do. Our experiences that day were unlike anything we have felt before.

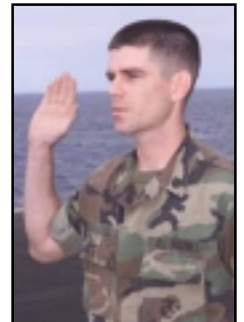


Cpl. Snider and Gen. Jones

care of me.”

After the short two hours we were with our families that morning, we all said our goodbyes and watched our loved ones file out onto the pier. We then moved up to the flight deck and fell in to a mass formation in preparation for the Commandant and Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps to arrive. I will never forget being called to attention and hearing “Marine Corps, *arriving*.” A chill went up and down my spine and I was filled with pride to be standing there as General Jones spoke to us. I thought, this is it, this is what U.S. Marines do, we go out into the fray. The Commandant and the Sergeant Major spent a lot of time with the Marines of the S-6; after shaking hands with several Marines and Sailors, the Commandant and the Sergeant Major departed and the crew of the USS Belleau Wood made final preparations to go underway.

We waved at our families one last time from the flight deck. All those months of training and preparation had come to that one moment, that last glimpse of our families standing there on the pier, waving and taking pictures and crying a little. We know that we will always have the support of our families back home; now we must carry out our duty to God, country, and Corps.



**SSgt. Miller
reenlists**

S-4: EMBARK; SUPPLY; MEDICAL

The deployment has started off with a bang. Capt Kane, GySgt Huichapa, SSgt Solorio, Sgt Almaguer and Sgt Loomis were sent ahead to Hawaii to help coordinate the logistic requirements for the sustainment training (i.e. which beach has the best opportunity for tanning). With Hawaii around the bend it is going to give the Marines a needed initial break from the hectic ending prior to us leaving California. The last week meant finalizing the load out of the ship by the Embarkers and the rest of Supply performing last minute purchases of items needed by the command for us to deploy.

Major Crabill has already start the race to see who will develop an ulcer faster with SSgt Hall. Capt Rux has already finished one of his TAD trips where he makes money and avoids the boat. Capt Storm is still talking about how he loaded the ship for John Paul Jones and SSgt Bergquist talks to himself in his sleep. Senior Chief Bittle and HM1 Ferrer have been seen at night stalking around peoples living areas with needles and talking of shots.

Overall everyone is in good spirits a managing to settle in just fine.

Congratulations!!!

Go out to Captain and
Mrs. Kane
on the arrival of their
twins born
June 13, 2002.

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The Men of 5th Platoon, 1st Force Recon

It was one of the hottest days of the year as we boarded the ship to begin our deployment. The Company Commanding Officer came down early to see us off. Then the men turned to unpacking their bags and settling in. The weeklong voyage to Hawaii was taken up by training and building. SSgt Ichimura, SSgt De La Cruz, Sgt Webber and Sgt Novakovitch spent the first three days building shelves for our gear, so it would have a safe home. As far as training goes we have used the available time to shoot and maintain our gear.

We pulled into Hawaii on the afternoon of June 22. The weather was pleasant and you could tell all were ready to get their feet back on land. That night we moved the men and equipment over to "K" Bay where 4th Force Recon Co is located. GySgt Rhon was there to greet us and basically turned the keys to the place over to us for the weekend. The first day the winds were high so we did a platoon dive along with some of the men from Recon Bn. The water was so inviting, warm and clear, that you almost forgot it was a training dive. After the dive the two platoons took part in some, well let's say, team-building activities. You know how Recon Marines are. The next day the winds again would not let us jump so we did some jumper refresher training on the ground while SSgt Currie did a fly over in the aircraft to check winds one more time. Still too high so the pilots took him and the crew on their very own island helo tour, what a lucky guy.

Now we are back on the ship and steaming to far off places. The platoon's spirits seem to be high and we continue to prepare and train for whatever the future holds in store for the Men of 5th Platoon, 1st Force Recon.

Seeds of Connection

By Chaplain Bruce Mentzer

mentzerbd@belleau-wood.usmc.mil

Ever stood at a funeral and heard someone say, "Well, you know, you reap what you sow," as we "comfort" friends and family? Happened to me recently. And I think we too often remember the downside of such sayings. Instead of looking at the seeds of good fruit in each life, we harvest and hold up the weeds and thistles. It's like the person who looks at the commandment, "Thou shalt not murder" and never considers the implied command, "Thou shalt provide life." I would like to spend a few minutes with you looking at seeds for good fruit, especially as we to deploy.

First, it goes without saying that we will need to stay in touch while deployed. Email, letters, care packages, phone calls, and audio/video tapes are great avenues for exchange—each has its limitations and pluses. Stay on the point in each contact. If you want to say, "I care for you and just want to know how your day went," do that and don't expect much more. Don't get into the things that your receiver can't help you with; STAY ON THE POINT. If you do it wrong, be honest about that and realize that much of the deeper communication will need to occur face-to-face. Letters are sometimes the most exciting "seeds" that happen (especially when you're at sea) and a care package won't be forgotten for weeks. And I remind Marines and Sailors that sending a care package from the ship to home will most likely bring the same result.

When you write or talk, seek to share your life by simply reviewing the events of the day. Reflect on the emotional side and be willing to show what you are passionate about. Remember what's important to your receiver. You

might get a quick letter back if you prompt them about what's good that's going on in their lives and remind them how good it is to hear from them. Most importantly, share yourself in every way (your goals, feelings, dreams, passions, prayers, and encouragements). Stay positive and leave much of the "work" of communication until you are together again. And when things are "flying apart," wait.—Wait twenty-four hours before writing those opening lines about the car, a jammed weapon, or the flooding kitchen. Seeds of communication can only grow so deep during deployment, so don't expect too much from them. *Most of your closeness will need to grow from consistent contact you kept while apart that will grow when you are together.*

Second, use the deployment to prepare seeds of closeness. One of the best "seeds" I've seen is writing a journal during the deployment to read together with your closest friends after the deployment. Maybe exchanging journals with a close friend would work for you. This will allow you to share the difficulties and good times in a more intimate way. These seeds will require a commitment, as you won't get immediate "umph" from them while we're separated. However, seeds of intimacy always take more time to grow and always yield a greater harvest.

Finally and most importantly, plant seeds of faith during the separation. Many make a commitment to read certain scriptures or devotional books together. Some set a time to pray for others, ask for prayer for themselves, or choose to share songs of faith (CDs can be mailed). Whatever seed you plant to reveal God's work in your life during this time, planting seeds of faith pull you closer to others as it shows your sincerity and search for truth.

Planting seeds of connection takes commitment and effort—it takes time and reflection.

The harvest of truly knowing someone and being known by someone is worth it.

Pacific Pride



Summer Time Fun For the Kids

ON BASE ACTIVITIES

BASE MOVIE SCHEDULE

All movies at the Base Theater are free. Movies are shown on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Wednesday and Thursday nights. For more information, call 725-9217. **Closed on the 4TH of July.**

BASE POOL SCHEDULE

Open June 18 - Labor Day

Area 13/31 11:30 -1600 Tuesday -Friday
11:00-1800 Saturday and Sunday

Area 17 11:30 -1800 Tuesday -Wednesday
11:30 - 2000 Thursday and Friday
11:00-1800 Saturday and Sundays

ALL POOLS CLOSED ON MONDAYS FOR LESSONS

SWIM LESSONS - IT'S NOT TOO LATE!

Walk in registration at each area pool

June 28 for	Lesson 2	July 1-12
July 12 for	Lesson 3	July 15-26
July 28 for	Lesson 4	July 29- Aug 9

For more information call Area 14 Pool at (760) 725-5084

BASE HORSE STABLES

If it is an occasional day of horseback riding that interests you, try a relaxing trail ride to explore the vast Camp Pendleton countryside. A few other activities include pony parties, dinner rides, horse shows and professional rodeo events. Riding- Riding Lessons-Trail Rides -Summer Camps-Pony Rides for \$1. For more information call 725-5094.

SUMMER READING PROGRAM

The Camp Pendleton base libraries offer the 2002 Year Round Up for youth of all ages. If you register at one of the three base libraries, each book you read goes toward parties, prizes and crafts. Teens may participate in the reading program as readers and volunteers to help promote reading to younger children. For more information about the summer reading program, call 725-5669.

SPECIAL ITT ANNUAL EVENT!!!

Join us for ITT's Annual Adventure Expo!!

Friday - August 16TH 10 AM - 1:30 PM

Free lunch, Astro Jumps, Theme Park Characters!

ITT has everything you need for your fun-filled trip to theme parks, resorts, dinner shows & much more!! Come meet the Representatives of each!

www.mccscamppendleton.com/semper_fit/ITTPRICES.HTML

OFF BASE ACTIVITIES

THE 2002 SAN DIEGO COUNTY FAIR

Come to the 2002 San Diego County Fair and grab a "Hunk Summer Fun" with an extravagant tribute to Elvis, the King o Roll. From Elvis memorabilia to nightly Elvis movies to Grand salutes to Elvis, the 2002 San Diego County Fair will leave you Shook Up! June 15 through July 7, 2002

General Admission:

Adults \$9.50

Children (6-12) \$4.50

Children 5 & under free

Hours: Weekdays - 11:00 am to 10 pm. Weekends 10:00 am to 11:00 pm Special Days: Mondays & Wednesday are Pay-One-Price Ride Days Tuesdays are Kids Days, Fairgoers 12 and under are admitted free Friday are PennySaver Value Days, with special discounts throughout the Fair

CARLSBAD DISCOVERY MUSEUM

Great fun for children! Great fun for adults! North County's hands-on family learning center with fun and adventurous exhibits around every bend! Science, history, the arts and environmental awareness are presented in an imaginative and playful way to encourage and challenge growing minds.

Cost:

Adults \$4.00

children \$4.00

under 2 free

Directions

Take the 5 freeway to Carlsbad Village Drive exit. Turn west off the freeway and approximately 1/2 mile later you will find Village Faire Shopping Centre on your right. The museum is located in the Northwest corner of the interior courtyard.

A message from the Key Volunteer Network

- * All CE wives are invited to join us for our first "Ladies Night Out" on Friday, Aug 2 at 7 p.m. at the base bowling alley. (Baby sitting is not provided; this is only for the ladies.) RSVP to your volunteer if you'd like to join the fun!
- * Our next KV meeting will be July 20 from 9 - 11 a.m. at the KVN center. Babysitting will be provided.
- * Planning is in the works for a CE Family Day in September. Keep your ears open for more details.
- * Please remember that it is normal for e-mail to go down on ship. Not to worry as it will eventually work again.

Pacific Pride



11th MEU (SOC) Marines Begin a New Chapter By Reading to Kids While Miles Away

Any Marine or Sailor will tell you, the hardest part of their job is having to leave behind a family of loved ones. Not only is it difficult for the deployed member, but for the spouse or caregiver and children at home who may go for 6 months without seeing the face or hearing the voice of a father, mother, or friend.

Marines of the 11th MEU (SOC), deployed with Amphibious Squadron Five, are now able to take part in an innovative program to help ease some of the tensions of deployment while focusing on the family. Betty Mohlenbrock, President and Founder of Family Literacy Foundation, created Uniting Through Reading® (UTR) during the Persian Gulf War as a way to strengthen the bond between adult and child and provide a bridge for communication and sharing. Through UTR, military parents can communicate through reading aloud on videotape to their children while separated during long deployments. It also serves as a vehicle to continue parenting from thousands of miles away.

Your deployed Marine can now read stories on videotape and send the tape home to your child who can now “see” and “hear” mom or dad in the warmth of your own home. In order to gain full benefits from the program, Family Literacy Foundation encourages families that receive videotapes to provide feedback to the deployed member; in the form of letters, email, photographs or even videotape of the child watching the parent’s tape. This is called the “Full Circle Method of Communication.”



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11th MEU hotline

- The 11th MEU has established two hotline numbers that
- will connect you to frequently recorded updates of activities once the deployment begins.
- Call (760) 725-0471 or toll-free (866) 676-0662.